In the claims:

1. (previously presented) A method for use by an access point in a wireless communications environment including multiple access points and stations, wherein stations gain network access by associating with one or more of the access points, comprising the steps of:

collecting bid messages from stations, each bid message being a request from one station to associate with the access point;

selecting the bid message collected from the station calculated to realize a greatest increase in data rate by becoming associated with the access point; and

causing the station which submitted the ~~a~~ selected bid message to become associated with the access point.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein each bid message includes at least one parameter indicative of a difference between a) biased distance between the station and the access point to which the bid is directed, and b) biased distance between the station and an access point with which the station is currently associated, where biased distance is a function of distance and load, and wherein the selecting step is based at least in-part on the at least one parameter.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the selecting step is based at least in-part on the number of stations associated with the access point to which the bid is directed.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein each of the steps is executed by the access point to which the bid is directed.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the step of causing the station which submitted the selected bid message to become associated with the access point is executed only if a selected maximum number of station associations with the access point has not been exceeded.

6. (previously presented) A method for use in an access point in a wireless communications environment including multiple access points and stations, wherein stations gain network access by associating with one or more of the access points, comprising the steps of:

collecting bid messages from stations, each bid message being a request from one station to associate with the access point and including at least one parameter indicative of a difference between a) biased distance between the station and the access point to which the bid is directed, and b) biased distance between the station and an access point with which the station is currently associated, where biased distance is a function of distance and load;

keeping track of the collected parameters;

wherein a parameter may be the number of stations associated with the access point, and wherein another parameter may be the distance of a station from the access point;

selecting only a subset of the bid messages, based at least in-part on the at least one parameter, such that the selected bid messages are from the station or stations calculated to realize a greatest increase in data rate by becoming associated with the access point; and

causing each station which submitted a selected bid message to become associated with the access point,

each of the steps being executed by the access point.